

The Eclectic Theosophist

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THE UNIVERSAL CHRISTMAS

By Irene R. Ponsonby

The Theosophist in speaking of the universal teachings or doctrines refers to those which have their basis in the fundamental tenets of every great World Religion—those doctrines which are what we may call traditional the world over. And one such traditional teaching is that the student give the teaching as he has received it, not otherwise. So today, as we have received the truths about the Christmas cycle from our Teachers, we pass them on to you.

Let us first clarify what we mean by 'universal', because, as we all know, the Christian festival of Christmas is not a universal celebration, and even where it is commemorated in our Western world, the customs and rites are by no means identical.

The *universal* celebration of Christmas may be divided into three aspects, provided that in doing so we realize that each of these is intimately linked one with the other and inseparable. These aspects are:

First, the return of or the passing of the Sun out of the South at the time of the Winter Solstice.

Secondly, the commemoration of the mystic birthdays of the Spiritual Great of all time.

And finally, the vital annual opportunity every earnest individual has to revitalize, to quicken, the Christ-child within his own heart.

Now, let us elaborate on each of these aspects.

Every great religion originally recognized, and some still do, the Sun as the emblem of the Cosmic Spirit, the Divine Light. Science today calls it heat that permeates every atom of our universe. This is the Christ-Child, the heart-light, enthroned in the spiritual center of all men. The early Christian, following the Gnostic terminology, spoke of it as the Logos, or the Word made Flesh, a graphic but terribly distorted and misunderstood teaching today. It is quite natural, therefore, that the stately pageant of the Sun and Planets as they follow their majestic paths in the Milky Way held a very special significance for the enlightened of all ages. Especially is this true of the times of the two Solstices and the two Equinoxes.

The Universal Christmas was, and is, celebrated at the time of the Winter Solstice on or about the 21st of December. This is the sacred festival of the Mystic Birth. And how appropriate this is. There is the burgeoning of summer-time, the voluptuous glory of color and shape and design and activity, which gradually gives place to the shedding of leaf and petal in the fall, the slowing of sap in vegetation. Then comes winter with the dark, damp earth of the furrowed fields fecund with new sown seed left fallow under the wintry rays of the Sun now at its most southerly point in the heaven. A pregnant hush haunts the days until, suddenly, like the first tentative cheep of a bird at dawn, the

delicate but virile spears of green life thrust their way up through the earth, and a new Solar year begins.

It is at the time of the Winter Solstice that the Grand Men of the world were born of the Spirit, or Fire, and if the time be ripe may yet be born today. These highly developed men after extensive training and self-directed effort, so expanded their inner consciousnesses and so divinely ensouled their spiritual-human natures that through the Initiation called the Mystic or Virgin Birth they became Christs, Bodhisattvas—Saviors and Teachers of their fellowmen.

"Man is a miniature Universe, an integral part of the Cosmos. In it he lives and moves and has his being." How wonderful it would be if we could only dwell deeply on this warm intimacy; if we could feel as closely identified with the pulse of the Cosmos as a little child, beloved of his parents, grows in the atmosphere of his home. Instead, we are so pitifully embroiled in our mundane relationships.

Within each one of us a divine Father, a Guardian Angel, stands ready to guide, instruct and inspire. Within each one of us a Virgin Spirit-soul leads, encourages, and supports us. Within each one of us an embryo Christ-child awaits quickening and birth. We, all men, are essentially divine, and being divine we must redeem ourselves by our own innate divinity.

This is the Cosmic moment. The world's need was never greater! All the forces of the Universal Life are with us urging us, not to some fantastic, over-ambitious task, but just to be truly inspired human beings. Urging us towards more consideration for others and less selfishness; a greater recognition of the deeper needs of humanity and far less meanness; a generosity in giving of ourselves, the selfless self, the first fruits of the Mystic Birth of the Christmaside. May we, each one of us, this Christmas let the Christ-child live and thrive and grow within us.

DEATH—A BIRTH CELESTIAL

By JAN MOLIJN

The mystery of birth and death has baffled mankind from time immemorial. And so far neither science, nor religion, nor philosophy has succeeded in lifting the veil. Yet several civilizations have produced exceptional seers and sages, like great world teachers, who did succeed in revealing the meaning of death and in giving solace and hope to the anguished. Most religions have formulated doctrines about the hereafter; roughly speaking, some teach eternal hell for the wicked and eternal heaven for the good. It is particularly Oriental religious philosophies which promise temporary after-death states, and envisage a return to Earth after certain experiences in invisible realms. As for those experiences, the Christian Father Origen, in his treatise *Against Celsus*, said: "Like Plato, Celsus taught that the path of souls from Earth to Heaven and from Heaven to Earth, passes through the seven planets." Similar statements

about post-mortem circumambulations may be found, among other scriptures, in the Hermetic work *Poimandres* and in the poetic Assyrian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz.

The foregoing passages seem to corroborate Prof. C. Jung's ideas about the archetypal symbol of the 'nocturnal sea voyage', indicating man's eternal knowledge of rebirth. But it is not only in the dim past that a come-back to Earth was considered a possibility; reading *Reincarnation in World Thought* by Head and Cranston, we find overwhelming proof of a universal belief in reincarnation all over the world, even by such popularly known persons as Sir William Crookes, Albert Schweitzer, Sri Aurobindo, Einstein, Dostoevsky, Emerson, and the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead (who wrote *The Case For Reincarnation*). It should be emphasized that in the past, ideas about the actual mechanism of such an elusive process were vague, which process includes such factors as: the divine origin and destiny of evolving man, and the composite nature of his constitution.

H. P. Blavatsky's first book, *Isis Unveiled*, which was published in 1877, contains but preliminary statements on the doctrine of rebirth. It was only in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) and in a few publications issued shortly before and after the appearance of this work that the doctrine received a relatively full exposition. And it is to these more detailed accounts that we owe the first esoteric insight into the 'ascents into heaven and descents into hell' so frequently referred to in the mystical literature of the past. They state that man comprises many monads, or consciousness centers—named differently in various philosophies—manifesting themselves on their respective planes, high and low, in vehicles formed by the kosmic elements of which each plane consists. Thus, the personal monad (an actor playing his role only once) expresses itself as a human being using—among other vehicles—a physical body on Earth. The Higher Human Monad covers the sevenfold Earth-chain (which subject cannot be enlarged upon in a short article), while the consciousness and activity of the Spiritual Monad embraces our entire solar system.

Theosophy teaches that after death man's lower vehicles disintegrate and resume their peregrinations through the mineral, plant, and other kingdoms of nature. The personal monad returns to its parent, the Higher Human Monad, which, in due time, is taken up into the bosom of its parent, the Spiritual Monad. Now, it is this latter monad of man which makes the round of the seven sacred planets of the Ancients, during which the Higher Human Monad is enjoying a seemingly unending dream of utter bliss, a condition referred to as 'heaven' in many world religions. When the Spiritual Monad has completed its round, and arrives again at our planet Terra, it releases the now awakened Higher Human Monad, which, in its turn, radiates a new personal monad into the future parents, whereupon, after conception and pregnancy, a tiny stranger is born.

In this way Theosophy gives us a clue to understanding the circumambulations of the 'soul' or 'spirit' along the planetary pathways of our solar system, and which have been and still are experienced personally by those Great Ones who have been trained to undergo initiations in some part of our globe. It is exclusively to those who have successfully passed through these trials that we owe any authentic knowledge about the nature of the after-death states. Of

old, for his kosmic journey, the neophyte was prepared in the mysteries, where he was taught to know Himself. We might ask here the pertinent question: 'What are we to understand by *ourselves*?'. Clement of Alexandria said: 'Know thyself, and you will know God.' The modern Dutch poet Simon Vinkenoog wrote: 'I have looked into the sun; I have recognized myself: I have seen God.'

A neophyte who had successfully returned from his kosmic travels—who had risen from the dead—was said to shine like the sun. In religious art such persons were often depicted with an aureole round their heads, such as the Christian Saints and the numerous effigies of the Lord Buddha, the Enlightened and Compassionate One, who, Theosophy teaches, is constantly watching the destiny of mankind, as it labors to shake off the Great Heresy of Separateness.

SPEAKING OUT—

WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF 'ECLECTIC'?

Inquirers have written us asking, What is *your* understanding of 'eclectic'? We know they know the meaning of the word, and the dictionary has confirmed their memory that it is derived from the Greek *eklektikos*, from *eklegein* to pick out, choose out, and that thus the primary meaning is "selecting; choosing, as doctrines or methods, from various sources, systems, etc." (Webster). But it is interesting that to these inquirers there remains something not clearly satisfactory in our own editorial choosing of the word. Have they reason for this? What is it that bothers them?

Let us seize the opportunity to share some thoughts that may bring fuller explanation and, perhaps, satisfaction to these inquiring and indeed intuitive minds. Paramount in the idea of *eclectic*, in its original sense, is indeed *selection, choice*. In fact some etymologists say the same root is in the word *religion* which thus would reflect a selection from basic truths; and the same root in *elegant* which, again, shows selection or taste in an individual's choices. What a man believes in *his heart* is his religion, his way of life, his selections from and understandings of Truth, whether this conforms outwardly to an orthodox religion or to no recognized 'religion' at all. What he believes, what he aspires towards, the way he thinks and feels and acts: that is his religion, by whatever word you wish to call it.

Truth, declare all the Sages, is rooted in Universal Nature and is obtainable by man, who is inseparably tissue of that Nature. That Truth today many call Theosophy. Another name would do but that is the name chosen: *theosophia*, wisdom such as the gods, beings evolved beyond our human stage, have and use. And Theosophia shines through the rays of science, religion, and philosophy, illuminating them; one reaches through these sunrays towards the apex-Sun itself, which is Truth. Now, Theosophy has sometimes been called a synthesis of these aspects. But this does not mean that it draws from, or selects from, these and thus produces a syncretistic system of thought congenial to all. It is the other way around: they draw from it; they merge into the crowning Source. In so far as religion, philosophy, and science reflect purely that Source-Light, in that degree of purity are they carriers of Truth.

You will see where this leads in relation to our own *Eclectic Theosophist*. It chooses, it selects, it draws from

many theosophical sources; but it seeks to show that the best in those selections is what most faithfully reflects the Primal Source, the Sunlight of the Spirit, which is their innermost and derivative funnel of inspiration. Our aim and object is to show that it is in the *original teachings* of Theosophy as given by H. P. Blavatsky under the guidance and inspiration of her Teachers, and in the contributions of those whose studies and researches follow along these traditional lines, in some instances reinforcing and supporting them—it is in these that we shall today find that which is nearest Truth.

We shall also point to universal theosophical thought reflected in many minds, ancient, medieval, and modern, again not saying we are eclectic because we select from them, but that we are eclectic because our selection points to their nearness to what we discern as the *Theosophia* of the ages. This, we believe, likewise was the eclecticism of Ammonius Saccas, 'Theodidakto', of Alexandria in his Eclectic School of Theosophy in the third century A.D. His aim was to reconcile all religions, it was said, showing each to be a reflection of the pristine Truth: not patching up and presenting an agreeable common denominator-religion by choosing good bits from many, but showing that the good in them was derivative from a Central Source, the *Theosophia* of the ages.

H.P.B. somewhere wrote that the future religions of the world will be derived from Theosophy. And was this not so of the past? Yet how soon did those religions turn from *Theosophia per se* to something less strong, less demanding intellectually, spiritually, even ethically? Will the Theosophy of the Masters and of H.P.B. suffer a similar fall into intellectual obfuscation and spiritual desuetude? History tends to repeat itself. A new cycle of opportunity is upon us, and it should be obvious that in the hands of each individual Theosophist lies a modicum of responsibility in the power of choice he exercises—if you will, in the eclecticism he employs.

We feel the point bears stressing, and we call attention to words of H.B.P. in her article 'The Year is Dead, Long Live the Year!' (*Collected Writings*, X, 280). She was addressing from fog-shrouded England (in one of her delightful flights of poetic fancy coupled with trenchant humor) the great Sun god, asking for "a little more light and warmth in the coming year than he gave us in the year 1888." She added a plea to that same bright luminary for her magazine *Lucifer* "to pour a little light into the no less befogged heads of those who insist on boycotting *Lucifer* under the extraordinary notion that he and Satan are one. Shine more on us, O Helios, Son of Hyperion!" Then she asks what kind of wish may we express for "the Theosophical Society in general, and its working members in particular?" and suggests a supplication: "Let us ask, Brethren, the Lord on High, the *One* and the *SOLE* (or *Sol*), that he should *save us from the impudent distortion of our theosophical teachings.*" (italics added).

There you have it, and in the awful heart-ache of that cry lies the challenge for today. In January 1889 the T.S., just over thirteen years old, was suffering from attack and wilful distortion of its philosophy from without. Today what would H.P.B. say of the far more dangerous distortions of theosophical teaching *from within*? And how can today's

Theosophical body politic face up to that sad accusation and challenge?

But the picture is not all dark. Today the informed reader may feel a cautious wave of optimism as he scans many of the theosophical periodicals. They breathe a new energy. They evidence a yearning to really know the Theosophy of the Masters, to give it study, to digest its meaning and apply its precepts. This is an enormous change from a short two decades ago. It is a tide that should be encouraged. Whether it flows through sources constitutionally administered by Adyar, through the associates and lodges of the United Lodge of Theosophists, through offshoots or remnants of other Theosophical Societies, or through the minds of independent workers and thinkers is not important. What is vital is this evidence of loyalty to the Idea, to the Great Cause, for this is what irrevocably draws all Theosophists and truth-seekers together. Again, it is also impersonality of thought coupled with vigorous action and, we may add, a wise eclecticism which views such work as the work of all, that will help swell the currents of this rising tide.

From among the more than dozen Theosophical magazines on our desk a two-page copy of an "Unattached Members Newsletter," Nov.-Dec. 1971, catches our eye. It is a reporting of papers or talks given at a recent weekend study at Tekels Park, near London. One is a synopsis by Jean Coulsting of her "personal research into the original teachings of H.P.B.", and gives condensed notes of these. The Editor comments: "Mrs. Coulsting left us with the impression of an aspirant honestly trying to face Truth rather than one drifting in comfortable illusion."

We pick up other periodicals: *Theosophical Journal*, published by the Theosophical Society in England; *The Theosophical Movement*, an independent journal unconnected with any Theosophical Society or other organization, published in Bombay, India; *Theosophy*, published by The Theosophy Company of Los Angeles, California; *The Theosophist*, official organ of The Theosophical Society, Adyar, India; *The Canadian Theosophist*; *The American Theosophist*; and our own closely associated friends of many years, *Theosophia* (Los Angeles, Calif.), *The Corresponding Fellows Lodge Bulletin* (Worthing, England), *Levende Gedachten*, *Manas*, and *Het Theosophische Pad*, the latter three of Holland and Germany. There are others. In each we find the ringing message of Theosophy. Each, it seems to us, with truer vibrancy than before, sounds and re-sounds the great fundamental teachings, the great gong-sounds of Truth given by H.P.B. and the Masters. This is what the world, wracked and reeling, needs in ever fuller measure. This it is our eclectic duty to encourage.

Now if there still be a little mystery about our choice of the word 'eclectic', let it remain. Paradoxes always point to truth. But let us as a key-thought keep clear in our minds that Theosophy is not a collection of the best from various religions, philosophies and sciences. Theosophy is the source from which they have drawn. Hence in them all is something selective of truth and good. One could gather these parts together and obtain a fair and perhaps sound philosophy or inspiring religion, but obviously they would be but tributary wanderings from an original source. Why not seek that Source itself? Such, at least, is our eclectic privilege.

—W.E.S.

CONVENTIONS ABROAD

(Theosophists in Holland known as "The Theosophical Society (H.P.B.)", formerly of Point Loma but now independent, held their annual Convention at The Hague, September 26, 1971. We are indebted to our friend Jan Molijn of Heemstede, Holland, for the following summarization of the address given by the President, Mr. Arien Smit, who spoke on "Theosophy and Psychology."—Eds.)

The subject of this title stems from the Greek saying 'Know yourself'. This exhortation implies that we are as yet far removed from possessing self-knowledge. What are we to understand by it? This is clearly shown in a statement attributed to H.P.B. and published in *Collected Writings*, III, 108:

"The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fiber of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived. The second requisite is the still deeper conviction that such knowledge—such intuitive and certain knowledge—can be obtained by effort. The third and most important is an indomitable determination to obtain and face that knowledge. Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call 'self-analysis'. It is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man. To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future."

All-important in this connection is faith, about which H.P.B. says that faith without will is like a windmill without wind. The word faith is equivalent to the Greek term *pistis* (as opposed to *gnosis* or knowledge). But there are two types of knowledge, viz., divine wisdom and terrestrial knowledge, their sources being the Self and the self. To reach the Self, the self (mind) has to be appeased: "Silence thy thoughts and fix thy whole attention on thy Master, whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest." (*The Voice of the Silence*) This is real faith. *Light on the Path* says it in this way: "Faith is the covenant between man's divine part and his lower self." This duality might also be depicted as a triangle over a square, meaning the higher triad and the lower quaternary. On this higher triad, the *Katha Upanishad* comments: "The wise one (âtmâ) is not born, nor dies." Job 12:12 states: "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding." The 'ancient' and 'length of days' no doubt point to a long series of progressive incarnations. As far as genuine faith is concerned, modern psychology does not take us very far. In *The Occult Glossary* G. de P. says that psychology is a kind of mental physiology, whereas in the Theosophical philosophy this term rather means the study of the spirit. We do not become conscious of our divine nature by taking hallucinatory drugs. Enlightenment requires many lives of constant effort. Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* is one of the books which undoubtedly has had an unfortunate influence on the younger generation, in spite of serious warnings against astral intoxication from many experts, in past and present, such as Rabbi Akiba, W. Q. Judge, Mabel Collins, Jung, and Govinda. The desire to know and experience more than we are entitled to in our present state of evolution is a disastrous desire, which will ruin the body and derange the mind. H.P.B. has given the West an insight into the only royal road that leads to a genuine expansion of consciousness. We conclude by quoting a relevant passage from H.P.B.'s *Messages to the American Conventions*. "Theosophy commands us to work for Humanity. The Ethics of Theosophy are more important than any divulgement of psychic law and facts."

(The following report was also sent the Editors by Jan and Lucie Molijn.)

On October 17, 1971, the Dutch branch of the Adyar T.S. held its Annual Convention in Amsterdam, attended by some 80 members. Geoffrey Farthing, General Secretary of the English Section, Adyar, spoke on "The Challenge of our Time". He particularly based his talk on the Mâhâ-Chohan's Letter of 1881, written by the Master K.H., and gave extensive quotations. Prof. Dr. J. H. Dubbink acted as translator. The following is a brief abstract.

Mr. Farthing said that after some 40 years of reading books on Theosophy and related subjects he had come to the conclusion that quite a number of ideas promulgated by H.P.B. and the Masters were confirmed by modern science, but that this was not the case with ideas put forward by some later theosophical authors. It is our important task, he said, to spread the Theosophical teachings; but it seems that nowadays hardly anybody knows what Theosophy is, which implies both technical teachings, service to our fellow men, as well as mystical experience, for which latter purpose *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path* had been given. The teachings in which the original and later Theosophy differ are related to the Root-Races, Life after Death, Astral Bodies and events in the Astral Light, Occult Chemistry, Lords of Karma, the Continents of Atlantis and Lemuria, the Coming World Teacher, and the Advent of the Sixth Race. It is particularly a number of classical—not C. W. Leadbeater's—Theosophical concepts relating to energy

and matter, space, time and astronomy (planets, sun quasars), and even psychology, that have found corroboration by modern science. (Victor Endersby points to the ultra-modern concept of 'irons' being equivalent to the 'laya centers' of *The Secret Doctrine*.—J.M.)

In reply to questions, Mr. Farthing said he was of opinion that the Masters had left the T.S. on its own, though they still need Messengers, and he discussed the work now being done in England. There are some 75 provincial lodges, but they attract hardly any new members and workers. It seems that all their energy is taken up with the business of everyday living.

Mr. Farthing reported that Mr. Leslie-Smith in a recent survey found that very little of the literature studied and present in theosophical libraries was Theosophical. Most books dealt with astrology, healing, spiritualism and the like. As a result, new members do not come into contact with Theosophy. To fill the need, Mr. Smith wrote an introductory course on Theosophy, which is being used widely. There is also a reading course on the S.D. and the M.L., and an elementary course recorded on sound tape. For younger people the T.S. started a public concentration and meditation course, which is very well attended. For unattached members a special Newsletter is published. At 50 Gloucester Place there is a talk or course every night.

In our opinion it was a very valuable meeting, which showed that also in the Adyar T.S. there are forces at work which tend to free the organized Movement from the science fiction so long promulgated as Theosophy.

FROM LETTERS RECEIVED

Frances M. Dadd, Worthing, England.—I have just read with interest *The Eclectic Theosophist*, No. 6, of 1st November, 1971. Quotations from G. de P., comments, letters, book reviews, all are worth while and helpful. *Golden Precepts* is certainly a *Guide to Enlightened Living*, if one learns to follow it. My old habit of proof-reading got the better of me: In the quotation from the Sanskrit *Iti mayâ śrutam* there should be no circumflex accent on the first *a* in *mâyâ*. It is not *Mâyâ* (illusion), but comes from the personal pronoun *aham* (*I*), and is the instrumental case, *by me*. Thus the quotation is literally 'Thus by me (it has been) heard'.

(Lack of space prevents inclusion of other selections, which must await our first issue in 1972.—Eds.)

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H. P. BLAVATSKY ON CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

We are in the Winter Solstice, the period at which the Sun entering the sign of Capricornus has already, since December 21st, ceased to advance in the Southern Hemisphere, and cancer or crab-like, begins to move back. It is at this particular time that, every year, he is born, and December 25th was the *day of the birth of the Sun* for those who inhabited the Northern Hemisphere. It is also on December the 25th, Christmas, the day with the Christians on which the 'Savior of the World' was born, that were born, ages before him, the Persian Mithras, the Egyptian Osiris, the Greek Bacchus, the Phoenician Adonis, the Phrygian Athis. And, while at Memphis the People were shown the image of the god Day, taken out of the cradle, the Romans marked December 25th in their calendar as the day *natalis solis invicti*

—H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, X, 278-79
'The Year is Dead, Long Live the Year!'

Though now universally observed by Christian nations as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, the 25th of December was not originally so accepted. The most movable of the Christian feast days, during the early centuries, Christmas was often confounded with the Epiphany, and celebrated in the months of April and May. As there never was any authentic record, or proof of its identification, whether in secular or ecclesiastical history, the selection of that day long remained optional; and it was only during the fourth century that, urged by Cyril of Jerusalem, the Pope (Julius I) ordered the bishops to make an investigation and come finally to *some* agreement as to the *presumable* date of the nativity of Christ. Their choice fell upon the 25th day of December—and a most unfortunate choice it has since proved! It was Dupuis, followed by Volney, who aimed the first shots at this natal anniversary. They proved that for incalculable periods before our era, upon very clear astronomical data, nearly all the ancient peoples had celebrated the births of their sun-gods on that very day. "Dupuis says, that the celestial sign of the VIRGIN AND CHILD was in existence several thousand years before the birth of Christ"—remarks Higgins in his *Anacalypsis*.* As Dupuis, Volney, and Higgins have all been passed over to posterity as infidels, and enemies of Christianity, it may be as *well* to quote, in this relation, the confessions of the Christian Bishop of Ratisbone, "the most learned man that the Middle Ages produced"—the Dominical, Albertus Magnus. "The sign of the celestial virgin rises above the horizon at the moment in *which we fix the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ*," he says.† So Adonis, Bacchus, Osiris, Apollo, etc., were all born on the 25th of December. Christmas comes just at the time of the winter solstice; the days then are shortest, and *Darkness* is more upon the face of the earth than ever.

*Vol. I, p. 313.

†This passage is from Godfrey Higgins' *Anacalypsis*, Vol. I, p. 314, where he ascribes these words to Albertus Magnus and gives as reference "Lib. de Univers."—*Compiler Collected Writings*

All the sun-gods were believed to be annually born at that epoch; for from this time its Light dispels more and more darkness with each succeeding day, and the power of the Sun begins to increase.

However it may be, the Christmas festivities that were held by the Christians for nearly fifteen centuries, were of a particularly pagan character. Nay, we are afraid that even the present ceremonies of the Church can hardly escape the reproach of being almost literally copied from the mysteries of Egypt and Greece, held in honor of Osiris and Horus, Apollo and Bacchus. Both Isis and Ceres were called 'Holy Virgins,' and a DIVINE BABE may be found in every 'heathen' religion

—*Op. cit. II*, pp. 763-65,
'Christmas Then and Christmas Now'

Let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be colored so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfill them consistently.

—*Op. cit. IX*, Editorial titled "1888"

We Theosophists . . . would prefer another day for our New Year . . . The first of Januarius was ever more sacred to Janus than Juno; and *janua*, meaning "the gate that openeth the year," holds as good for any day in January. January 3, for instance, was consecrated to Minerva-*Athene*, the goddess of wisdom, and to *Isis*, "she who generates life," the ancient lady patroness of the good city of Lutetia . . . It is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists—the Esotericists especially—as their New Year. January is under the sign of Capricornus, the mysterious *Makara* of the Hindú mystics—the 'Kumáras', it being stated, having incarnated in mankind under the 10th sign of the Zodiac. For ages the 4th of January has been sacred to Mercury-Budha, or Thoth-Hermes. Thus everything combines to make of it a festival to be held by those who study ancient Wisdom . . . The day seems in every way more appropriate for us than January 1, the day of Janus.

—*Lucifer*, V, No. 29

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THE STORY OF JESUS—A MYSTERY-TALE

By G. DE PURUCKER

The entire story of Jesus is a Mystery-tale setting forth in dramatic form certain very important events which took place in Initiation-chambers or crypts; and the parables included in this Mystery-tale also referred very definitely, if briefly, to certain of the fundamental teachings given to the neophytes at such times.

A study of the lives of the great Seers and Sages of past times will reveal more or less exactly the same entanglements of thought and circumstances that are so easily discernible in the Christian story of Jesus. The very names of most if not all of these great Seers and Sages have been covered around with allegory and symbol; myths have been told about them: in a few cases they are alleged to have been born of a virgin or born in some other mysterious way, and to have lived and taught moving the hearts of men by their works of marvel; and, after finishing their teaching, finally passing away in some mysterious manner.

Furthermore, as the Initiatory Cycle in the case of individual men simply copied the grand term of cosmic existence, therefore does the Christian New Testament in its symbolic allegory and imagery, in addition to being a covered and undisclosed tale of the Initiation-Crypt, likewise set forth the embodiment of the Cosmic Spirit in material existence.

Every country had its schools of initiation, its schools of the great Mysteries; and these mysteries were closely guarded and kept very secret indeed. It was the habit in those days to choose some great human being who had taught men, and around that individual to weave a web of symbolic teaching, setting forth—so that ordinary men in reading could not understand but yet would be attracted to spiritual things—what actually took place in the initiation-chamber.

That is what happened in the case of Jesus called the Christos. Consequently, the sayings of the four books called the Gospels were not written for *historical* truth but *symbolic* truth.

'Christos' is a Greek word which means one who has been anointed. This is a direct reference, a direct allusion, to what happened during the celebration of the ancient Mysteries. Unction or anointing was one of the acts performed during the working of the rites of those ancient Mysteries in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The Hebrew word for an anointed one is *Mashiahh*, meaning exactly the same thing as the Greek word 'Christos'—the 'Anointed.'

It is of course well known that the Jews were even then expecting and still expect the coming of their 'Messiah,' which is a common way of misspelling the Hebrew word *Mashiahh*; and the mystical allusion here in this ancient Jewish belief is identical with the mystical and esoteric meaning that the word Christos contained when employed with an allusion to the rites of initiation.

—Extract from *The Story of Jesus*

1897, CONVERGING CYCLES

A CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM
KATHERINE TINGLEY

At the close of the year 1897, amidst the turmoil and unrest engendered by the titanic forces of good and evil contending for the mastery of the coming centuries, are heard the cheery, silvery notes of the Christmas bells and the loving voice of the Christos—bidding men cease their selfish strife and their mad race for power and gain, calling them to turn their faces to the Light and unite their hearts and voices in one great anthem of Brotherly Love, of Peace and Good-will to all creatures; and urging us with courage and patience to brace our inner natures against all that seeks to lead us from the true Path, that we may gain greater strength to do our whole duty to our fellow-men.

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While the bells are ringing on the outer plane, calling men to a recognition of the New Time, the soft silvery tones of the compassionate Heart of Life are sounding forth their sweet music to the souls of men, calling them away from the paths of darkness, unrighteousness and despair, to the ever-abiding glory of a truer and better life and the hope and peace of a New Day.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas tree, dotted with lights and bright with tinsel that reflects those lights and multiplies them manifold, is an old pre-Christian symbol used by the peoples of Northern Europe at the time of the Winter Solstice; and here is the inner significance of it.

Have you never heard of the World-Tree with its roots in the realms of spirit and whose branches are the great suns and systems of suns? This World-Tree began in the beginning of this Cosmic Age to bring forth all the stellar hosts. Now the Winter Solstice is the beginning of the cosmic New Year, and so these northern peoples knowing some of the ancient truths, celebrated this cosmic event with the Christmas tree. It symbolizes the World-Tree, and the lights are the suns that bestrew the deeps of Space, hinting to us the message from the divinities who constantly give us the light of love, the light of mind, the light of hope eternal. But so far have we fallen from the wisdom of our forefathers that now the Christmas tree has become merely a sign of festivity, except for the few who preserve its significance in their hearts.

The giving of gifts on the Christmas tree was emblematic of the self-dedication of the gods so that the worlds might come into being. "Here is my gift. It is born from myself."

—G. DE PURUCKER: *Wind of the Spirit*